

From: Bushong, Linda (MDE) **On Behalf Of** Leikert, Howard J (MDE)
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 4:36 PM
To: MDE-SchoolNutrition
Subject: IMPORTANT - Community Eligibility Option

Exciting News! Michigan has been selected to be one of the three states to operate the Community Eligibility Option (CEO) for School Year 2011-2012. There is much work ahead of us and very little time, but this is such an excellent opportunity for the students in the state of Michigan. Your cooperation and support of this program is needed and appreciated.

Under the CEO, ALL students in qualifying schools/districts will be able to walk through the serving line and get a free breakfast AND lunch! And for school employees, those meals will not need to be counted as free, reduced, or paid, just the total number of meals served! It is a great option for schools and the students they serve.

We are working on guidance for this program. It will be ready in the near future. The intent of this email is to just inform you of our selection as one of the pilot states and also to give you some information that will help you prepare to decide if the CEO option is best for your district.

Here is the latest information we have regarding CEO. I have updated the information, as more is known about the program at this time. We will have tools (Excel spreadsheets) to help you determine whether or not to participate in CEO. In the meantime, the following information is pertinent:

Community Eligibility – This program requires schools to offer breakfast and lunch but will allow individual schools to count and claim meals without the normal free and reduced application process. Any school building that has a percentage of directly certified students of 40% or more, according to the data reported in your Local Educational Agency Review System (LEARS) report, or as of April 1, 2011, will be eligible to participate. The percentage is calculated by taking all directly certified students (including homeless, migrant, foster, runaways) and dividing by the student enrollment (students available to participate in school meal programs). If that percentage is 40% or more, the school is eligible. After the percentage has been determined, it will be multiplied by a factor of 1.6. For example, let's say 50% of the students at ABC Elementary are directly certified as free. We will multiply that percentage by 1.6 to get 80%. This option will then allow this school to serve ALL students free meals. However, they will claim 80% of their meals served as free and the remaining 20% of the meals served as paid. Only total meals will be counted at the Point of Service (POS). The percentages will then be applied to the total meal count. If necessary, the school district will be required to pick up the shortage of the paid meal cash not collected using this system. If your district's direct certification percentage is 62.5%

or higher, 100% of the students going through the line will be served as free and claimed as free!!

The reason I send this notice out is to give schools and districts time to calculate their respective percentages and to decide whether they think they would participate. Districts will be able to participate in a variety of ways: by individual school building or groups of school's direct certification rate, or by entire district's direct certification rate. Needless to say, at 62.5% or more directly certified, it would appear to be a very easy decision...all students will eat for free. However, schools need to be thinking about the schools at 40%-62% where not all meals will be free and the district MAY be required to make up the revenue shortage for paid meals and reimbursements using non-federal funds. More detailed information on this exciting program can be found at: www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SP-23-2011_360204_7.pdf.

Districts will still need to collect socioeconomic data at the student level to remain eligible for programs such as Section 31a, e-rate, and Title I. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) understands that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with the United States Department of Education (USED) and the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to determine how various federal programs will be calculated in the future, and is committed to making this option viable for school districts across Michigan.

You do NOT need to reply to me or the Department at this time. We will be sending out more information on this program soon. Please wait until we issue this additional guidance before sending questions. The guidance we are preparing will help answer many of your questions. Yes, we realize school is about to start, but we did not want a tight timeline to stop our participation in this wonderful opportunity.

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